

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MAHARSHI DAYANDA



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Historical Setting

Historical research has indisputably proved the existence of a highly developed civilization in India during the Vedic age. Due to various factors, not yet clearly explained by scholars, a process of decline set in the Vedic civilization. During this period of social stagnation and spiritual decay various creeds and doctrines challenging the foundation of the vedic civilization arose. Mean-while overrun by the forces of Islam, India entered into a period of political uncertainty and social conflict. Though during this time there were a number of attempts for religious rejuvenation and reconciliation of various creeds, they remained confined to specific and attained very limited success. The old Vedic civilization remained buried under the debris of the past.

The British conquest of India later on brought about a new vigour and dynamism in the social, political and intellectual life of India. India was not only politically and economically unified

but she also came in contact with the Western science, technology and ideas. Along with this current of western culture the past and almost forgotten civilization of India was also revived from oblivion by a galaxy of scholars, both western and Indian, through their researches on Indian antiquities. The interaction of these two cultural forces one, rational secular and science oriented, imported from the west, and the other, spiritual and transcendental, revived from the past heritage of India, stirred an intellectual fermentation in the country and produced what is known as the Nineteenth Century Renaissance. This Renaissance was a multi-dimensional cultural movement and it connotes different, sometimes contradictory, thought-currents. One section of the people, extremely orthodox in character, however remained outside the influence of this Renaissance and tried to preserve the conventional customs and institutions. Another section was carried off their feet by the invigorating influence of the western ideas and they looked at the

past culture of India with unconcealed disdain. The more sober section tried to bring about a reconciliation between the past heritage of India and the western science and technology.

India produced two outstanding personalities, one on the eastern side and another on western, to lead this school of reconciliation. Broadly speaking, Raja Rammohan Roy of Bengal & Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati of Gujarat belong to the same school. The difference between them was more one of degree and emphasis rather than fundamental. Raja Rammohan was a great scholar and knew a number of languages, both western and Indian, including Sankrit. In those days a number of outstanding scholars came to India from England and the English language was making steady highway in the country. The age was in dire need of a man capable of interpreting the language of the Vedic texts in its original and uncorrupted form. The Pandits of the age interpreted the Vedas in the light of the Puranic mythological stories. Their interpretation could not give a clear idea of the Indian civilization as developed in the Vedic age. The European Scholars learned Sanskrit from these Pandits and necessarily their views were also coloured by the interpretation made by them. It was Maharshi Dayananda who with extraordinary insight tried to liberate his outlook from the ballast of the Puranic stories and interpreted the Vedic texts in the literal sense. His interpretation opened up a new vista about the nature of the Vedic civilization. Here in lies the

basic role of Maharshi Dayananda in the nineteenth century cultural history of India. His contributions must be judged in the light of historical context and the specific historical need which he satisfied.

Brief life-sketch—

three phases of his life :

Born in 1824 in an orthodox Brahmin family of Morvi state in Kathiawar, Gujrat, Dayananda developed a deep interest in religion in his young age. While still in his teens he lost his faith in the traditional practice of the Hindu religion and realised the futility and dangers of institutions like image-worship and polytheism. His unconventional ideas brought him in conflict with his father and Dyananda left the house of his father as the latter tried to force upon him a marriage when he was only twenty two years of age. The career of Dyananda now enteted into the second chapter. He broke off all relations with his home and took the life of an ascetic. He wandered on foot all over India and saw the details of the Hindu Society with his own eyes. This wide experience produced rich harvest in the fertile soil of his mind irrigated by deep study and meditation. In 1860 he began studies under Swami Virajananda Saraswati at Mathura and continued it for two and a half years. In 1864 he started public preaching and thus entered into the third phase of his career. In his public preaching he, at

1. His real name was Mul Shankar.

first, used only the Sanskrit language which could not be understood by the broad mass of the Indian people. He, therefore, later on started preaching in vernacular. On April 10, 1875 he first established the Arya Samaj in Bombay. In 1877 the constitution of the Arya samaj was finally prepared at Lahore. Dayanandan was now fully absorbed in his mission of preaching the new gospel. He wrote a number of books, the most significant being Satyarth Prakash explaining his ideas and tried to organise people under the banner of the Arya Samaj. His mission proved very successful in the Western part of the country—Gujrat, the Punjab, U. P., and Rajasthan. On October 30, 1883, the earthly existence of the Maharshi came to an end.

Basic approach of Dayananda to Indian problems :

A man of iron will and versatile genius Dayananda left a deep impression upon the history of India. He gave the Indian people a new direction as well as a new dynamism and enriched diverse fields of our national life. An attempt may be made to assess his many-sided contributions by dividing them into three groups, namely religious, social and political. This division must not be taken in any rigid sense because his contributions to various fields were closely interrelated. He looked with dismay at the conversion of the Hindus to Christianity by the missionaries in the wake of the political subjugation of the country. The superstitions and evil practices existing in

Hindu community gave the Christian missionaries an opportunity to carry on their work of conversion successfully. Dayananda could not lend his support to the various evil practices in the Hindu society which, he found, were eating into the vitals of the Hindu civilization, India or Aryavarta, the land of the vedic civilization, he feared, might lose her identity as a result of political subjugation and other evils. What was her political subjugation due to? According to him the subjugation of India was due "to mutual feud, differences in religion, want of purity in life, lack of education, child marriage, .. indulgence in carnal gratification, untruthfulness and other evil habits." Social degeneration, in his view, was the cause of Political subjugation. Political liberation, therefore, he thought, was conditional upon the removal of the social evils. And what was the basic cause of social evils among the people of Aryavarta? It was due to their deviation from the original Vedic civilization. Restoration of original Vedic civilization, therefore, was the only remedy to all the social evils among the Hindus. Thus, in the eye of Dayananda, political liberation, social reform and revival of the Vedic Culture were causally connected. Restoration of Vedic civilization would lead to social reforms and prepare the country for political freedom. Thus in Dayananda we find a religious preacher, a social reformer and a political prophet combined in one. Though we shall discuss

2 Satyarth Prakash. Quoted in V. P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P. 60.

his contributions under three separate sections still this integrating factor must not be lost sight of.

Religious Reforms :

Swami Dayananda was an out-and-out religious man and he became an ascetic. His asceticism did not however lead him to ignore the society and go into seclusion for salvation of the soul. With a spirit of complete detachment he lived in society and worked for society.

Swami Dayanada found that the Hindu society of his time was entirely different from the Hindu society of the Vedic period. Superstitious customs and institutions were maintained by the people in the name of the Hindu religion though they had no sanction in the Vedas. Polytheism, idolatry, untouchability etc. were regarded as essential features of Hinduism but none of them, he found, could be justified by the Vedic standard. He saw, that a large number of people, repelled by the superstitious Hindu practices, were attracted towards Christianity. He tried to arrest this process by showing to the people the real character of the Vedic religion.

The degeneration of the Hindu civilization, Swami Dyananda analysed,

started with the religious system of the Puranas. The mythology of the Puranas, which is the latest development of the Hindu thought, was the basis of the popular Hindu religion but this mythology could not, he pointed out, claim any support either from the law books or the Vedas. The commentators on the Vedas who arose during the Puranic period however tried to find in the Vedas sanction for their own ideas. Therefore, they interpreted the Vedas in their own way. Men like Sayana and Mahidhar belonged to this class of commentators. They belonged to what is usually called the mythological school of interpretation of the Vedas. They interpreted the Vedas to justify the Puranic mythology and thus they tried to give the present degenerate popular Hindu religion a Vedic sanction. The western scholars accepted these commentaries as authoritative and so their interpretation of the Vedas was also influenced by the writings of Sayana and Mahidhar and others of this school. Dyananda tried to interpret the Vedas on the basis of original texts without being influenced by the works of the later age.

(to be continued)

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It is accepted by all that Yaska, the author of Nirukta, is the highest authority on the interpretation of the Vedas. He is quoted with respect by Sayana and Mahidhar also. Swami Dayananda tried to interpret the Vedas on the basis of the principles laid down by Yaska in his Nirukta. According to Yaska all the terms in the Vedas have been used in their jougika derivative or sense. It implies that there cannot be any proper names or historical reference in them. Yaska may, therefore, be regarded as the founder of the etymological school of the interpretation of the Vedas (also known as Nairuktik school) as opposed to the mythological school (also called Aitihasik school). Swami Dayananda by following the etymological school gave the Vedic mantras a meaning entirely different from the traditional one. The terms like Agni, Vayu, Surya, Akasa etc. used in the Vedas do not, according to the etymological school, refer to particular deities presiding over different departments of nature. They are used in two senses. Sometimes they indicate physical objects and forces and sometimes they refer to the Supreme Being. One Supreme Being is referred to by various terms. Words like Agni, Vayu, Surya, Soma are used to describe the indescribable whom the Vedas term Om. The sense in which these terms are used whether in the sense

of physical objects or to describe the indescribable Supreme Being is to be judged by the context alone. By explaining the various terms used in the Vedas in their etymological sense, Dayananda gave a highly interesting interpretation of the Vedic hymns. Urvasi, as for example, according to him, does not mean the heavenly nymph and a celebrated beauty in Indra's court but lightning. The Vedic mantras which appear as silly stories to many, contain according to Dayananda's interpretation, truth of profound significance.

By following these principles Swami Dayananda interpreted the Vedas which gives us the picture of a highly developed and scientific civilization in ancient India. His interpretation is found in his famous book Satyarth Prakash which he wrote in Hindi. The first ten chapters of the book deal with the explanation of the Vedic teachings. In the eleventh chapter he explains the religion of the Puranas and the Tantras which, according to him, is a clear deviation from the Vedic teachings. In the twelfth chapter the Buddhist, Jain and Charvaka views are explained and commented upon. The atheistic views of these schools led to the decline and fall of the Indian civilization and therefore Dayananda thought the recrudescence of these ideas should be checked by all means. The

Vedic Scholarship of Swami Dayananda is clearly revealed in this book and no one, whether he agrees with him or not, can read this book without admiring the analytical power and depth of learning of the author. The main purpose of the book is to inspire the people to reconstruct the Indian life on the model of the ancient Vedic society "by a pruning of all the engrafted shoots upon the Vedas."³

In the book *Satyartha Prakash* Swami Dayananda tried to establish the thesis that the Vedic religion was absolutely monotheistic in nature. In the Vedas there are hymns which assert the unity of God but at the same time there are passages where many divine beings or devatas are referred to. This has led many to conclude that Vedic religion was polytheism in character. Max Muller considered henotheism as the most appropriate term to explain the Vedic religion. By polytheism, he pointed out, we understood an organised system of Gods, each occupying different positions and ranks in the hierarchy, under the authority of one Supreme God—either a Zeus or a Jupiter. Under the Vedic system he found no such hierarchy of position among the gods, and, therefore, Max Muller preferred the term henotheism to explain the Vedic religious system. Swami Dayananda could not agree with these views. He contented that the Vedas refer to only one Supreme God though He was given a large number of names. As the attributes of God are innumerable so also the names given to Him. The terms like Agni, Vayu, Surya which occur in the Vedas do not, according to Dayananda,

refer to different gods, they are different attributes of the same Almighty. Different names which are given to the Almighty God are also names of different material objects, and the actual sense in which the terms are used must be judged, as we have already pointed out, with reference to the context.

The interpretation of the Vedas as given by Dayananda appears to many as ridiculous. Some consider him to be a false interpreter of the Vedas. His interpretation is undoubtedly unconventional and it goes against the traditional faith and dogmas. But that is no reason why he should be dismissed summarily. His interpretation is based on a definite principle which he follows consistently. One should either show that the etymological principle of interpretation is itself wrong or that his interpretation is not justified by that principle. But no one has yet tried to cross sword with Dayananda on that level.

Social Reforms :

Along with his attempt to revive the original Vedic culture Dayananda tried to introduce a number of social reforms in the Hindu society. He found that a number of social practices among the Hindus which made the Hindu society vulnerable to the Christian attack had no Vedic sanction. He, therefore, tried to purge the Hindu society of these evils.

Dayananda was violently opposed to idolatry and brought as many as sixteen charges against it.⁴ He raised his strong voice against the custom of traditional

3. Mac Donald, *The Government of India*, p. 235.

4. For these charges see Swami Dayananda's *Satyartha Prakash*.

sacrifice and encouraged travels by the Hindus to foreign lands. Like Raja Ram-mohan Roy he stood for the emancipation of women. He found that contrary to the Vedic Principles a number of inhuman restrictions and taboos were imposed upon the Hindu women. He tried to remove these taboos and restrictions and championed the principle of equality of men and women. The system of child marriage was disapproved by him and no man below 25 and no women below 16 should, in his opinion, be given in marriage. He was a great advocate of female education and remarriage of widows.

Swami Dayananda was opposed to the system of caste restriction in the form in which it existed in the Hindu society. He however tried to revive the Vedic system of Varnashrama. According to the Vedic principles he thought that one's Varna should be determined not by birth but by capacities, psychological dispositions and actions. The society, according to him, should be divided into four castes only on this sound Vedic principle. He considered the innumerable castes and sub castes existing in the Hindu society on the hereditary basis as contrary to the fundamental spirit of the Vedic sociology. The system of untouchability as existed in the Hindu society was bitterly denounced by him and Mahatma Gandhi appreciating the outlook of Dayananda observed. "Among the many rich legacies that Swami Dayananda left to us, his unequivocal pronouncement against untouchability is undoubtedly one."

In the Shuddhi movement Maharishi Dayananda introduced one revolutionary

item in the programme of the Arya Samaj. He believed that 'lost' Hindus, that is the Hindus converted to other religions, should be brought back within the Hindu fold. This movement of re-Hindusing the fallen is known as the Shuddhi movement. With Vedic liberalism and rationalism he believed that the door of Hinduism should not remain closed to those who once had left it for some reason or other.

Swami Dayananda tried to bring about a radical change in the educational system of our country. The system of education introduced into India by the British, whatever might be its advantages, had no relation with the past cultural heritage of the country. The products of this system became culturally alien to the general mass of the people. Swami Dayananda tried to change this system of education and he may rightly be considered as the precursor of the national system of education which became popular during the Swadeshi movement. He maintained that the people of India must study the old and uncorrupted culture of their land and for this purpose they must turn to Sanskrit and read the Vedas. The students must not simply acquire knowledge but also form their character and become good members of the community. The Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College was based upon the ideas of the Maharishi and there, in

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5. The split of the Arya Samaj into two groups. One led by Lala Hans Raj and the other by Swami Sraddhananda (Munshi Ram) need not be discussed in this essay. It may however be mentioned that the DAV College remained under the control of the first group and the latter group founded a new educational institution called the Gurkula near Hardwar.

addition to the Sanskrit and the Vedas, English, Western Sciences, Western Philosophy, History etc. were also taught.⁶ It is thus clear that Dayananda was not opposed to the study of Western science and the English language but he considered a thorough knowledge of the past Vedic culture of India and the Sanskrit language as essential for the national regeneration and social progress of India.

The Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayananda is an important force in the social life of modern India. By constructive activities it has always been trying to lay the foundation of a new society in Aryavarta. Besides running a number of schools and colleges for both men and women, it has set up a number of orphanages and 'homes' for widows. The Samaj has its own depressed classes mission and it has raised thousands of downtrodden social pariahs to the status of higher classes. It has championed with steadfast devotion the cause of the emancipation of women and has brought comfort and happiness to a large number of child widows. The Samaj has also organised relief in times of social distress caused by natural calamities like famine and flood.⁷

Political reforms :

Swami Dayananda was not a political thinker in the technical sense of the term

but a careful study of his views clearly reveals his political mind. He contributed immensely to the domain of political thought without himself being a politician. Though a religious man par excellence he did not ignore the material side of human existence. No aspect of human life was alien to him and his mission was to bring the entire human existence under the guidance of an allpervading spiritual philosophy.

The most striking feature of his political philosophy that easily draws our attention is his contribution to the concept of nationalism. Nationalism in the modern sense is essentially a political concept but it draws its vitality from its cultural content. The British government by unifying the country through railways, telegraph, common laws and administration, created objective conditions for the rise of political nationalism. The role of Swami Dayananda was to introduce into this concept of nationalism a soul of its own. He tried to make the people proud of their own past Vedic culture by explaining to them its real nature and grandeur. The Oriental Scholars of the West did much to discover the past culture of India but they could not clearly differentiate the elements of pure Vedic culture from those of the decadent Puranic age. It was Swami Dayananda who first drew our attention to this vital aspect of the study of Indology. In this connection the observation of Dr. Mazumder may appropriately be quoted. He writes ; "In the seventies of the last century the religious prophets, like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Dayanand, did much more than the Orientalists to make the

6. Hans Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East, p. 65.

7. See Introduction by Ghosi Ram to the Commentary on the Vedas by Swami Dayananda. For a history of the Arya Samaj see the book of Lajpat Rai.

people of India proud of their own culture.'⁸ The contributions of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Dayananda towards making the Indian people, at least the mass of the people, proud of their past culture is certainly greater than those of the Oriental scholars. But the difference between the outlook of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Dayananda should not be lost sight of. Sri Ramakrishna tried to popularise the past Indian culture as a whole, but Swami Dayananda tried to revive the Vedic culture only to the exclusion of the Puranic culture. In fact, many of the superstitious ideas and practices prevailing among the Hindus which follow from the decadent age of Puranic mythology can by no means be supported. A more discriminating attitude distinguishes Swami Dayananda from Sri Ramakrishna.

Like Swami Dayananda Raja Rammohan Ray also tried to enrich the cultural content of Indian nationalism. A critical student of Indian nationalism cannot however ignore the difference in the outlook of these two outstanding products of the nineteenth century India. The attitude of Raja Rammohan and the Brahma Samaj was essentially eclectic. Their attempt was to create a new synthesis taking elements from various civilizations like the Hindu, Muslim and the Christian. The role of Swami Dayananda, on the other hand, was to explain to the people the Vedic Culture in pure and unadulterated form. He exhorted the people of India to create a new civilization on the basis of the Vedic principles taking various elements from

Western science and technology. Hans Kohn has rightly pointed out that though the Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj "were children of one and the same revolution." It was "the Arya Samaj which by reawakening the India of the past, did most to pave the way for the India of the 20th century."⁹ Mrs. Annie Besant, it may be mentioned here, dates "the undermining of the belief in the superiority of the White Races to the spreading of the Arya Samaj" (and the Theosophical society).¹⁰

Though Swami Dayananda's main contribution to the field of political thought lay in introducing the cultural content to the concept of Indian nationalism, he was not a narrow nationalist. He stood for national patriotism but was opposed to national arrogance. He in fact championed the cause of universalism but his concept of Universal Brotherhood did not go against the principal of national patriotism. Like Sri Aurobindo of the later period he held that national cultures of different states should instead of coming in conflict with one another contribute to the development of a cosmopolitan human culture. He proclaimed time and again : "The wall of isolation and prejudice set up the nations of the earth will soon crumble down the dust before the onrush of a tidal wave of a great idea and all the nations of the earth will take part in a joyous festivity of love."¹¹ Swami Dayananda did not support everything

8. Dr. Beman Behari Mazumdar, History of Political Thought from Ram Mohan to Dayananda, Vol I : Beugal, p. 336.

9. Hans Kohn, op. cit., p. 63.

10. Mrs. Besant's Presidential Address to the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

11. Alokannada Mahabharati, The Master's World-Union Scheme, pp. 12-13.

Indian nor did he condemned everything foreigner. He was the greatest critic of several elements of ancient Indian culture. He himself observed : "Though we are born in Aryavarta (India) and still live in it yet just as we do not defend the evil doctrines and practices of the religions prevailing in our own country on the other hand expose them properly in like manner, we deal with alien religions. We treat the foreigners in the same way as we treat our own countrymen in recognition of our common humanity."¹² Swami Dayananda praised several traits of the British national character, such as, their better social efficiency, superior social institutions, self sacrificing and enterprising spirit, obedience to authority etc. He found many good qualities in the western civilization and stood for a reconciliation between the two. There was no scope for any arrogance in his catholic outlook. Explaining the attitude of Dayananda, Acharya Pronobananda wrote : "India is the home of Eastern culture and England is the type of western culture. Eastern culture is essentially spiritualistic, while Western culture is essentially materialistic. Both are incomplete, one without the other. Perfection lies in the harmonious combination of both. It is through divine dispensation that India and England have been united. Both cultures have met in India so that each may profit by the experience of the other, so that the imperfection of both may be healed."¹³ A dispassionate study of

his views clearly indicates that his mind was free from all narrowness and arrogance.

If we are to use any modern 'ism' to connote his philosophy, it is better to call him a humanist. His humanism was based upon the concept of spiritual man. Man represents a divine spark within him and this divinity unites the entire human race. An individual is not different from an animal if he remains under the control of his physical impulses only. By unfolding the potentialities of the divine spark inherent in every man, an individual can develop his humanity. Swamiji himself said : "Should a man act like an animal, which if strong oppresses the weak, and even puts them to death, he is more an animal than a man. He alone can fitly be called a man who being strong protects the weak. He that injures others in order to gain his selfish ends can only be called a big animal."¹⁴ Man can outgrow his animal existence only by developing the divine forces within him. He will then feel the unity of mankind and work not simply for his own gain but for general welfare. Swami Dayananda tried to elevate man to this spiritual level. He often told his disciples : "We have come to work for the good of the world, we must not look to our own happiness" Again he often said : "The good of the world must be placed above the good of one's own or even that of one's friends and relations."¹⁵ In this connection we may refer to the ninth and

12. Introduction to Satyarth Prakash by Dayananda. The introduction is taken from Light of Truth on English Translation of the Satyarth Prakash of Dayananda by Dr. Chiranjiva Bharadwaja, p. iv (introduction).

13. Acharya Pronobananda, Thakur Doyananda and Arunachal Mission. Quoted in Alokanand Mahabharati, op. cit., pp 10-11

14. Introduction to Satyarth Prakash by Dayananda taken from Dr. Chiranjiva Bharadwaja, op. cit, p. iv (Introduction).

15. Alakananda Mahabharati, op. cit., p. 12.

tenth principles of the Arya Samaj as laid down by Swami Dayananda. The ninth principle stated : "Not to be content with promoting one's own happiness or well being but to consider one's welfare only in the welfare of all...." The tenth principle ran thus : "To have due regard to one's own individual freedom and development with the ultimate object of promoting general weal, or in other words, subordinating, disciplining and developing self so as to promote social welfare."¹⁶ Thus to promote social welfare of man was the ultimate objective of the Arya Samaj. Man should not be selfish but should work for others—this is the ultimate message of Dayananda whom we can possibly truly characterise as a great humanist.

Humanist outlook of Dayananda led him to dream of a new social order which one may call Moral Socialism. He had the vision of a cosmopolitan commonwealth of man. All countries would be free and equal and each national unit would be a union of free individuals. In this ideal society neither money nor trade and commerce would exist in the traditional sense. There would take place only an exchange of goods between different centres. Railways, telegraph system, aeroplanes etc. would remain for the welfare of the community—as a whole. Under the scheme of 'gain' shall give place to motive of 'service' to the whole community—each living for all and all for each."¹⁷ Like a true soci-

alist Dayananda championed the interest of the submerged, downtrodden and exploited classes in society. He said. "In this New Era, God will manifest Himself amongst the submerged classes. Great religious teachers will rise from their ranks.¹⁸ But this new social order, he was firmly convinced, would not be established by force or by introducing changes in the social system only. What was necessary was a change in human outlook, a change of human nature. Referring to the activities of the socialists who were trying to establish a new social system by force he said, "They are pursuing a wrong track. Liberty, equality and fraternity shall never be established on earth by blood-shed. The only means to that end is spiritual force and love.¹⁹ "Not common interest but love alone, according to Dayananda, can bring into existence a new social order without the frontier of nations and division of class.

Dayananda tried to apply these principles to the organisation of his Arya Samaj and the various Ashrams established under its auspices. The organisational structure of the Arya Samaj was based on the principle of democratic election. The Ashrams were regarded as the common property of all its members and everything was managed by them in cooperation. They were like so many religious republics.²⁰

Though Dayananda had his utopia he was not an utopian thinker but a practical

16. Quoted by V. P. Varma, op. cit., p. 57.

17. Alokánanda Mahabharati, op. cit., p. 157, For detail of the ideal society, as envisaged by Dayananda, see the chapter 'What is Thakur Dayanand's scheme of this book.

18. Ibid, pp. 30-31.

19. Ibid., p. 32.

20. Ibid., p. 32.

idealist. He believed that India, the cradle of the Vedic civilization, had to play a vital role in the world. But as long as India would remain enslaved she would not be able to play that role. He, therefore, wanted to make India free and supplied a dydamic philosophy to Indian nationalism. His role was to prepare the country socially and psychologically for freedom. He himself did not take any direct part in the political movement against the British but the British Government was immensely afraid of him and his Arya Samaj. As Romain Rolland has put it : 'He (Swami Dayananda) always claimed to be non-political and non anti:British but the British Government judged differently. 21' Once when Swamiji was at Silchar (Assam) the police arrested him along with two of his disciples but they were later on released as there was no valid charge against them. The Government however always exercised pressure upon his disciples who were on Government service.22 The British India, it is clear, understood the far-reaching and revolutionary implications of his teachings and activities. It is therefore, not surprising that Sir Valentine Chirol, who Visited India on behalf of 'The Times' to and out the causes of Indian unresf after 1907, considered the Arya Samaj as a serious menace to the British supremacy in India. The impact of the doctrines of Swami Dayn-

nanda and of the Arya Samaj founded by him is obvious though no detailed study on this topic has yet been made in our country. Zacharias has aptly remaked that "Tilak merely carried on the lines Dayananda had inaugurated".23 The political outlook of Lajpat Rai was besed upon the doctrines of the Arya Samaj.

Two common charges against Dayananda refuted :

After explaining his main contributions in broad outline let us refer to and comment upon the two charges that are usually brought against Dayananda. He is considered by some as 'reacfionary' anti-modern and revivalist. Secondly, his aggressive and milltant posture is denounced by many. Zacharias, as for example, wrote ; "with him (Dayananda) rowdyness had entered Indian public life".24 Do these charges stand the test of logic and historical analysis ?

Dayananda, it is true, derived his inspiration for creating a new India from the Vedic past. But on that account he cannot be considered as more 'reactionary' than the pioneers of the Renaissance and the and the Reformation mavements of Europe. The Renaissance movement derived inspiration from the ancient Greek civilization. The Reformatian movement returned to the original bible to

21. Roma in Rolland, the life of Ramakrishrishna, 157-53.

22, Alokkananda Mahnbharati, op cit, pp, 67-68.

23. Zacharas, H.C. F. Renascent India, p. 39.

22. Ibid., P. 39

combat the corruption of the Christian Church. If these movements can lay the foundation of modern Europe, is it reasonable to hold Dayananda as 'reactionary, and antimodern ? Shri Durga Prasad has aptly described him as the 'Luther of India,"²⁵ Swami Dayananda. one should remember, found greatest opposition to his work from the orthodox Brahmins of country. He was neither a 'reactionary' orthodox nor was his vision dazzled by the glitter of the modern western civilization. He was therefore condemned both by the orthodox as well as by the blind worshippers of 'modernism'.

Let us now come to the second charge. Dayananda was full of energy, dynamism and vitality, He firmly believed that national regeneration could not be attained by a spirit of passivity, inertia and resignation. Courage of conviction and honesty of purpose made him assertive. His ideas and activities brought about a new energy and enthusiasm among the masses of the Indian people. He made his appeal "not to an English educated elite but to the

broad masses of his fellow countrymen."²⁶ His message stirred the imagination of a section of the Indian people and brought in them a sense of pride in their culture. With him, therefore, entered not "rowdyism' but assertoin of the self-respect by the Indian people. Moreover, as Dr. Varma has put it, "the militancy manifested by Dayananda and Arya Samaj was partly a counterpoise to the domineering attitudes of the two other semitic churches in India, Ialam and Christianity."²⁷

A detailed study of the life, ideas and activities of Swami Dayanda will fully justify the remark of Dr. K. P. Jayaswal that "in the nineteenth century there was nowhere else such a powerful teacher of monotheism, such a preacher of the unity of man, such a successful crusader against capitalism in spirituality."²⁸ A critical examination of his views will enable us to discover solutions of many of the evils modern India is suffering from. We can forget this savant of modern India only at our own peril.

Concluded)

25. Durga Prasad. An English Translation of the Satyarthsh Prakash of Moharshi Swami Dayananda. See Introduction. P. xii.

26. B. B. Mazumdar, History of the Indian Reformation, p. 68.

27. Dr. V. P. Varma, op. cit., p. 59.

28. K. P. Jayaswal's article in Dayananda Commemoration vvoium, pp. 162-63,